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Before and After

I sat with a young man I have known for much of his life. I've always been fond of him but life has been a struggle for him, especially the past five years. Hard and unavoidable circumstances, joined with some personal mistakes and bad judgment, had landed him in situations more difficult than I've ever had to face. We've been out of contact, though I've offered more fervent prayer for him than most anyone else I've known.

He called out of the blue to ask to see me for spiritual direction. That sounded very different. And when he arrived at our meeting time, I was taken aback by his demeanor. Something powerful had happened to him. He was in a new place. For the first time I saw him accepting what life had dealt him rather than bucking against it. And for the first time, perhaps, he had asked for some help. As a result, the whole world looked different to him. The old anger and hurt were gone. He expressed hope and excitement about the future. "For the first time, I'm making plans," he said, and if those don't work out, something else will." He recounted an experience of the holy washing over him and giving him the sense that things would be alright. His eyes showed a new sensitivity. Something had touched him and he had felt it. He had softened and is beginning to come to terms with his life. Things which seemed impossible to him now look possible. He seems to know that life will keep being hard, but accepting that fact has helped life suddenly become easier. A new window of understanding has been opened. The future won't be completely free of pain, but I have a sense that this young man will never "unknow" what he has now come to know.

The next morning I celebrated the early Eucharist on the Feast Day of the Conversion of St. Paul. Paul had a dramatic before-and-after experience of grace, a time where he came to accept how he had been living and came to see new possibilities, a time where a warm assurance came over him that things would be alright. His story sure sounded like the one I had heard the afternoon before. And Paul's story is really each of our stories.

We go through life with various situations and struggles. It's hard, even under the best of circum-

stances, to come to accept who we are and that the world around us is what it is. We do a lot of pressing against things, denying the reality of our situations, pretending they need to be different for us to survive, butting our heads up against a series of brick walls. Then, at some point, we have enough. We reach the end of our wills and we see things just aren't going to be different. We accept that life is what it is. That's usually a very painful experience. We don't really want to admit we are who we are. And we really want the world to be different. It's frightening to accept things as they are because we think, at some level, it will mean our demise. But life brings us all to that point of brokenness. We just can't go on like this. We don't know what might be ahead but we know this isn't working anymore. We accept things. And we begin to let go.

St. Paul's story is very much like ours, also, in that when we reach that point of acceptance and letting go, a brand new light floods into our lives. Suddenly the anger and resentment lifts. A new sense of hope emerges. We see the world we have been pushing against is actually much kinder than we imagined. There is help for us out there as soon as we see we need some help. Maybe it is true that sin manifests itself primarily in our lives by convincing us that we don't need help. Sin actually means simply that we do need help, but we admit that only when life forces us to. How quickly grace pours in from that moment on!

Hope emerges. We see a plan developing and even beyond as we recognize that, if this plan doesn't work, something else will.

Before and after. We all have those moments. They are remarkable evidence of God's abiding grace, proof that we have been accompanied through all our struggles even when we were totally unaware. God has been with us just waiting for the opening. It doesn't take much of a crack for that light to come into our darkness and change everything.

Accept who you are and what life has given you. Watch grace come in and transform it all. Before and after times reveal that we are dependent on God and that God only is dependable.

— The Rev. Robert C. Wisnewski, Jr., St. John's, Montgomery, Alabama

Power of Pentecost

Jewish heritage and scripture place Pentecost fifty days after Passover. The intervening seven weeks gave it yet another name, the Feast of Weeks. From the wheat harvest it was also called the Feast of Harvest, or Shavuot, a time of thanksgiving. Gifts and sacrifices were offered for worship. Communal meals were eaten, to which the poor and strangers were invited.

The Church best knows Pentecost for the coming of the Holy Spirit. Pilgrims and residents of Jerusalem were so awed that 3,000 were added to the faith that day. Christ was our Passover; the Spirit brought the first harvest; Pentecost is the date to jump-start the Church.

What happened to the believers during those fifty days? The short answer is, "not much," but they did pray and were taught. They likely shared the Eucharist. They managed to elect Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot, but scripture never mentions him again.

There was a flurry of appearances of the risen Jesus at and near Easter, first to the women and then to the close disciples. Paul gives us a nice list of appearances in I Corinthians (15:3-8). Traditions support Jesus' continued appearance; some scholars believe the encounters continued for as long as eighteen months.

Luke wrote a pithy account of the Church before the Ascension. He prefaced the Book of Acts saying, "*I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'*"

Jesus' ascension marked the end of the first forty days of the Church. Just before he ascended to Heaven, Jesus said, "*It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to*

the ends of the earth." Of course, they did receive power, and they did witness!

Luke kindly gave us some information on the Church after the Ascension. He wrote, "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." Their size was "about a hundred and twenty." (Acts 1:14-15)

All of those had either seen the resurrected Jesus or were in direct contact with someone who had. At least "five hundred," and perhaps several times that number, had seen the risen Lord. That means more than 75% (or maybe even 90%) of the eyewitnesses were at home pondering, ignoring, or feeling "spiritual but not religious." They weren't praying with and encouraging the Church. Perhaps some had their noses out of joint because they disagreed with this or that. Some may have felt insufficiently recognized. Others may have just wanted their reputations to look good, socially or professionally.

Even Peter was a little bummed out. At his meeting with the risen Jesus by the Sea of Galilee, the best he could muster to Jesus was that he was "fond" of him. (John 21:17, per the original text.) But at Pentecost that same Peter became emboldened to stand up to the world!

The Church before Pentecost had seen the risen Lord! Where were the 5,000 who had been fed? Where were those who had been healed, or saw miracles, or had been taught? Where were the Palm Sunday crowds? Where were the rest of the "five hundred"? The resurrection had to have been rumored just about everywhere, but only "about a hundred and twenty" were gathered.

I have seen the resurrected Saint John's. The dwindling parish that God and you called me to is coming alive with new people, worship, and ministries. I sense the promise of a Pentecost here, a gradual one that has already begun.

Many others have seen the resurrection of Saint John's. More will. Yet on Sundays my heart becomes discouraged when I see only about half the number of the pre-Pentecost Church here, and wonder where the others are, and mutter prayers for them. Then at Mass I am filled with joy and give thanks for those who are present in body or spirit.

Saint John's tries to keep its priorities straight: Word, sacra-

nents, and care of souls. Most of us need our souls cared for seriously. We have children to teach, nd to lovingly enjoy. We have lderly to honor. We have incredble talents for ministries, talents ow in action and more coming. Ve are empowered, largely ecause we're faithful to the asics of worship and care. Those emain first priorities.

I'm sure that the tiny Church efore Pentecost could sense omething big coming as it rayed. I sense it here. And like ne Church at Pentecost, many ill come to share the mission nd the blessing. (This sure beats the survival mentality that can weigh down churches today.)

Seizing a blessing isn't passive. It wasn't for the Church before Pentecost. The little group was out of the societal mainstream, singing a song that only God could teach them. It was like a remnant of those whom Jesus had touched and to whom he had revealed himself in resurrection. But Pentecost came. Pentecost has been promised and is even beginning to happen.

— The Rev. William Thiele,
St. John's, Passaic,
New Jersey

Without the Trinity

Without the Father, creation would be empty space.
Without the Son, no sacrifice to set us free.
Without the Spirit, no inspiration to embrace.
We would be nothing without the Trinity.

Were there no Father, no Son to cure this mortal land.
Were there no Son, no Spirit breathed on you and me.
Were there no Spirit, we could not feel the Father's hand.
We would be lost without the Trinity.

Praise to the Father, for gifts beyond our right to ask.
Praise to the Son, for love we are too blind to see.
Praise to the Spirit, for showing us a heavenly task.
We find our world, our love, our fire in the Trinity.

— Rick Waterhouse, St. Mary Anne's, North East, Maryland

Failures

Fail is a strangely popular word with our young people. They share written stories and examples of poor decisions people have made and the results of those decisions. Some of the more graphic illustrations are found in videos on the Internet. In these videos, instead of simply reading about situations, others can watch the results of the often silly things that are done. If the video shows actions indicating massive lack of judgment with accompanying broken bones or broken relationships, it is referred to as an "epic fail."

On one hand, we do not want to fail. We want our relationships to work and we want to succeed. When it comes to the important parts of life, we want to avoid an "epic fail." I am all for wise decisions. Popular media, on the other hand, encourages all sorts of poor decisions and asks us to record them to share with the world. Your "epic fail" can be a grand success! Wisdom is not valued. That might be because it doesn't record well and score lots of hits on *YouTube.*

On the other hand, God calls us to take risks. God doesn't want us to make unwise dangerous decisions, but God does want us to risk failure. In a life of faith, when we believe that God is leading us, we take steps of faith in which the outcome is not guaranteed. We risk loving when it looks as if we will be rejected. We risk giving when it looks as if there will be no return of what we have given. We risk investing in the lives of others when it looks as if they won't make decisions we agree with. We risk doing the right thing when we are sure we will pay a price.

Even when those situations turn out the way we feared they would, they are not a failure. God watches us in those situations and is pleased. We may see failure in them, but God sees our obedience as epic. "For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one." God trusts us to take risks with the blessings he has given us. God is not looking for us to fail, but increase the Kingdom. God is anxious to tell us, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

— The Rev. Ralph Osborne,
St. Thomas,Menasha, Wisconsin

Pentecost as the Festival of Conviction of Sin

In John 16, as Jesus is preparing his disciples for his departure, we have one of the most detailed discussions on the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Bible. Jesus began by saying, "I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when the Holy Spirit comes, He will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment..."

When our Lord speaks here of the coming of the Holy Spirit, we must take care we do not misunderstand. The Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, was active before the foundation of the world, moving over the face of the waters at creation. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their offspring were made what they were by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What Jesus is speaking of in John, and what we see taking place in Acts on the day of Pentecost, is something powerfully new. After Christ's ascension, the Holy Spirit was poured out with far wider influence than ever. The church was energized and put into motion. The Holy Spirit entered the preaching ministry of the church to convince people of a prominent truth concerning sin.

Jesus said, when the Counselor comes, "he will convince the world concerning sin, because they do not believe in me." The word translated "Counselor" is a word with legal implications, normally in favor of the defendant, but here more as a prosecutor. Jesus said he will "convince" (also translated "convict") the world of sin, "because they do not believe in me."

In context, Jesus is talking to the unbelieving hearers who rejected him from the beginning to the end of his ministry. Had they believed in Jesus and what he had to teach, they would have been convinced of the magnitude and depth of their sin and then turned to him for refuge.

I was reading a biography of a man named Reuben A. Torrey. Born in the mid-1850s, he was a man of great evangelical influence in this country, joined in ministry with the renowned Dwight L. Moody. Torrey was later pastor at Chicago Avenue Church (now the Moody Church). But as he talked about the great growth of the Chicago

Avenue Church, he also noticed one aspect of their common life that upset him. He was happy about the additions to his congregation, but he expressed concern that there seemed to be "little conviction of sin." I found that mighty interesting.

I mean, what do people today want to hear from the pulpits in our churches? Many people want their "hurts" ministered to, and other "felt needs" without caring about the hostility between God and them. As Mark Honegger wrote in *Modern Reformation* magazine, "Christianity solves a problem that few people today seem to be interested in." And that is forgiveness of their sins.

Jesus was clear that sin is always, the most important issue, as the story of the paralytic shows. His friends brought a paralytic to him and asked Jesus to heal him. Jesus said, "O.K. I'll heal him." And he said to the paralytic, "Go your way, your sins are forgiven." And they said, "No, we mean heal him." And Jesus said, "I just did!"

There is a sense in which I think almost every man of the world knows it is wrong to lie, steal, have intemperate desires, and other wickedness, but the Holy Spirit probes deeper. Those who have received the Holy Spirit are aware of a power working in them, a disturbance. The Holy Spirit will bring awareness of the inherent disease we all carry, the seed of all those uncharitable thoughts, the irritability, envy, pride – the depth of sins that dwells within. It is absolutely imperative that men should be convinced, convicted of sin.

So here is an honest question for you this Pentecost: Has the Holy Counselor himself convicted you? Only when we answer that question fully can the Holy Spirit's joy become our real strength. For those who are forgiven much, love much, and count it all joy to be given undeserved new life.

– The Very Rev. Frank Limehouse, Cathedral Church of the Advent, Birmingham, Alabama

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The Great Thanksgiving

By far my favourite part of the Prayer Book is what we call the General Thanksgiving by Bishop Edward Reynolds, of Norwich, 1661. It's called a general thanksgiving because, like the General Confession, it's meant to be prayed by all the congregation. It covers all the bases. One of the key words it uses repeatedly is "all." It even begins by addressing God as "Almighty," which is a contraction of "all mighty/powerful." God holds all power over all things in his hands. We use that word (almighty) all the time in the liturgy, probably without really considering what it means most of the time. "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open..."; "I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible..."; "Almighty and everliving God..."; "Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men..."; "...and the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost..." This is who we worship and who we love above all others. Not because he is almighty, however, but just because he is God; or to put it even more succinctly, and more mysteriously, just because he IS.

In the General Thanksgiving, we go on to address our Almighty God as "Father of all mercies." What is mercy? We usually think of it as something like pity, like when people with some sort of affliction pleaded with Jesus for mercy. But it's much more than that. Mercy is the compassionate love of God for his creatures. We pray for his mercy in particular ways depending on our needs; and even though we may not know exactly what we need, like the person who goes to the doctor seeking relief from a pain or an ailment that he can't really identify, we simply ask God for his mercy, trusting that he knows what we need. In fact, the most common prayer offered up to God is "Lord, have mercy." How many times do we say that in an hour on Sunday morning? Whenever I see an ambulance or fire truck on the move, I pray, "Lord, have mercy." Whenever I hear bad news about someone, or listen to a grieving relative struggle with a eulogy, or even when I listen to the news, "Lord, have mercy." It's the prayer for all occasions, which is why it's so

much a part of the Church's liturgies.

Almighty God is the "Father of all mercies," i.e., our all-powerful God is the source of all the good things that we have and that happen to us. So we give him "most humble and hearty thanks for all [his] goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men... We bless [him] for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life." We bless God for blessing us, for creating us in the first place, for preserving us (keeping us alive and well). We all thank and bless our all-mighty God for all the ways he blesses us and is merciful to us. That's not something we get together to do only on the second weekend in October. That is the ideal Christian attitude every day of life. We should all thank God every morning when we wake up and every evening when we lie down and every time something good happens, even though it may not be very pleasant, like sitting down to lima beans or cauliflower, or having little samples of blood drawn out of your arm at the hospital.

"But above all," the General Thanksgiving continues, above all the many ways God has blessed us and been merciful to us — we thank him for his "inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ." A word that doesn't fall off the tongue easily, inestimable — something that cannot be estimated. We can't even guess at the tremendous measure of love that God has for us, that moved him to lie down on the cross to redeem us. It's inestimable/immeasurable because it's infinite, there's no end of it. And our finite little minds can't even comprehend the immensity of that love, or the fact that God has that much love for each one of us. Even if we could respond to the first and greatest commandment by actually loving God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, it wouldn't come close to the inestimable love he has for us.

That our all-mighty God, whom the universe cannot contain, so humbled himself to enter into the womb of a pure teenage girl, and being born as a helpless baby put himself at the mercy of his creatures, many of whom later rejected him, tortured and finally killed him in a most cruel way, and then to rise from the grave — by all of this he opened up to us the fountain of his limitless grace, and he fills us with the hope of

everlasting life with him. He did all this, as the General Thanksgiving says, "For the means of grace, And for the hope of glory." And it's all just a very small taste of his inestimable love for us.

So the big question is, "How do we respond to that kind of love, to that kind of mercy?" Are we even capable of responding in an adequate way? Yes we are; God has given us the ability, the grace, to respond in the person of his Son, who is himself "the means of grace." Jesus is the way we respond, the way we give God the Father our "most humble and hearty thanks for all [his] goodness and loving-kindness." St. Paul says, "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom. 10:9). As the Word of God, Jesus is the supreme expression of divine love. He is everything that God has to say to us. And Jesus is the only thing that we can say to God in response to that love. He is our thanksgiving to God.

He is our Eucharist — that's the Greek word for thanksgiving. And that's what we do every week. We come seeking Jesus, and he really does speak to us through the proclamation of his Gospel; and he really does feed us with his Body and Blood in the sacrament of the altar. And having been nourished by him and filled with him, the only way we can possibly respond is by putting our thanksgiving into action, "By giving up ourselves to [his] service, And by walking before [him] in holiness and righteousness all our days." Loving him in return, loving whom he loves, and loving the way he loves — that's what it is to walk before him in holiness and righteousness.

Having died with Christ in baptism, and having been filled with him in our eucharistic worship, we are part of his Body. As St. Paul puts it, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Living for the God who lives in us, "giving up ourselves to [his] service" — that is how we give thanks.

— The Rev. Ian Whetmore,
St. Mary's,
Fredericton, Canada

Share the Good News

French scientist, Louis Pasteur, lived at a time when thousands died of rabies each year. He worked day and night on a vaccine that could save them. Just as he was about to begin experimenting on himself, a nine-year-old boy called Joseph Meister was bitten by a rabid dog. The boy's mother begged Pasteur to experiment on her son. Pasteur injected him for ten days and the boy lived. Decades later, of all the things Pasteur could have had etched on his headstone, he asked only for three words: Joseph Meister Lived!

The Bible says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). Imagine having a cure for cancer, but refusing to share it, or saying, "I'm too busy." The Gospel is only good news if we are willing to share it, and get it to those who need it in time.

Too many of us have become preoccupied with our material well-being. Instead of believing God for the salvation of our loved ones, we're believing him for houses, cars, holidays, and so on. We may quote, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for" (Hebrews 11:1), but the "things" we have in mind are material and temporal, rather than the eternal things of that "...better country..." (Hebrews 11:16).

We're supposed to seek the Kingdom of God first and foremost and all these other "things" will be added to us. In fact, we don't even have to ask for them, they're automatically given to us when we put God's Kingdom ahead of our own (Matthew 6:33). So be wise, share the greatest news anyone can hear.

— Holy Trinity Lutheran Church,
New Rochelle, New York

Sayings . . .

The best way to forget all your troubles is to wear tight shoes.

God doesn't call the qualified. He qualifies the called.

You are stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.

Many people want to serve God, but only as advisors.

Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.

The Feast of Pentecost

Pentecost is one of the Church's three main feasts, along with Christmas and Easter. That is a theological and liturgical truth, albeit one not widely acknowledged. One does not see on Pentecost that breed of churchgoer glimpsed like rare birds only on the other two festivals. In any event, it is generally only clerical types who insist, often priggishly, on the co-equal status of Pentecost as one of the three major Christian feasts.

The archaic nomenclature of "Whitsunday" derives from the practice in northern European locales of administering baptism on this feast rather than Easter, which was typically a much colder day. Baptismal candidates wore white garments for baptism — thus the term "White Sunday," that evolved into Whitsunday. Red is the liturgical color most often employed for the feast now, and it is not unusual to see lots of red-bedecked parishioners as well.

Pentecost is the older name, appropriated by the Church from Judaism. A Jewish festival known as the Feast of Weeks celebrated a combination of wheat harvests and the giving of the Law. Pentecost means "fifty days," and in the Church's reckoning of time, this festival comes fifty days after Easter. Regular worshippers will note an immediate change on the fifty-first day, as it were: The acclamation at the start of the Holy Eucharist reverts to the basic Trinitarian formula — "Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit", which has not been used since the end of Epiphany. Eastertide, to use another archaic term, is over.

Many people see Pentecost as "the birthday of the Church." To speak of a birthday is misleading and erroneous. The Church was God's "new creation by water and the word" (cf., Hymn 525). Those who date the Church's creation on Pentecost point to the wonderful lesson from the second chapter of Acts, where St. Luke employed the vibrant imagery of tongues of flame, the sound of a mighty, rushing wind, and the ecstatic, universal proclamation of the Good News. That the Church should have had such an auspicious beginning is certainly one way to look at it. At the same time, there are

variant claims for the Church's first Eden. One such claim dates it back to Abraham's time and the covenant established with God. Abraham, given a family and unnumbered promises, was sent out to a new land. Those who point to this view see it as the primordial commissioning of the Church. Yet a third view dates the origin of the Church to that moment of the Crucifixion when Jesus entrusted his mother and the Beloved Disciple to one another, making a new community or family gathered at the foot of the Cross — a wonderful image for the nature and purpose of the Church, united in and by his love for them and theirs for him: "Made one body with him, that he may dwell in us, and we in him."

With something as varied as "that wonderful and sacred mystery," as that splendid collect from the ordination services puts it, it follows that there are many aspects to the origin of the Church. These three views complement one another: The Church without any one of the essential elements is less than the fullness God intends. Imagine a Church without the Holy Spirit, or without a sense of mission, or without the constitutive memory of Christ's death (and resurrection), and it is easy to see what is missing. The Church is all of those and more, and Pentecost is as good a day as any to celebrate the origins of the Church, provided we take the wider, longer view of things.

— The Rev. William Munro Shand, III, St. Francis, Potomac, Maryland

Mission Statement

The Church of Ireland, as an authentic part of the universal church of God, is called to develop growing communities of faith, in and through which the Kingdom of God is made known, and in which the whole people serve together as followers of Jesus Christ for the good of the world to the Glory of God.

In the power of the Spirit, our mission requires us to order our contemporary worship and life in a manner that nurtures *growth*, promotes *unity*, and liberates us for *service* in the world that is God's.

The Importance of Leisure

Summer is a time many people plan their vacation, or at least a few leisurely evenings for friendly conversation over barbecues, beside a pool, on a boat or skiff, or along a mountain brook. This has nothing akin to laziness. It is in many cases the real work and stuff of life. Every human being has a need for a Sabbath rest. It is part of what God meant for us when he created us. The Jewish theologian, Abraham Joshua Heschel, writes of rest in the Sabbath tradition: "The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time, rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to the holiness of time. It is a day on which we are called upon to share what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world."

Leisure, holiday or vacation, or merely extended time with family and friends is like unto this. Occasionally you may hear someone say, "I can't afford a vacation." This can mean that they are too financially strapped to go to Europe or Hawaii, or cannot spare the time away from their work or business. But it can also suggest that they assume vacations have to be far away, expensive or long — which they do not. The bigger question is not if they can afford to take a vacation, but whether they can afford not to take time away from their work.

When President Nixon visited Moscow in 1972 he learned that all the Communist Party officials were expected to take off a month each year for a vacation. As Nixon noted, "This was not because the party cared whether Brezhnev bagged his annual quota of wild boar, but because it believed that time off would enable the top officials to do a better job." Evidently the Soviet officials didn't take enough time off! In his memoirs, Nixon also wrote, "I saw first-hand how much Eisenhower needed exercise to give him relief from the tensions of his job. Without it, he would pace the floor of the Oval Office like a caged lion. When he did finally have a chance to get away, his temperament would change completely."

I could cite a multitude of examples from political and spiritual leaders, artists and composers, engineers and scientists, to demonstrate to any reasonable person the importance of leisure and vacations for effective, fruitful work — which of course is not the chief or God-given purpose of Sabbath rest, but is at least like unto it. Leisure renews the spirit, refreshes the mind, invigorates the body, restores perspective, and gives us much needed opportunity to spend formative, life-shaping time with family and friends. The remembrance of such times is often what sustains us in our work.

After Jesus had sent the disciples out on a preaching mission they returned all achatter with what they had done and taught. And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest awhile." No doubt some of the disciples were overly enamored with their success. It can be intoxicating. Some, perhaps, returned stressed-out, having digested too much of the world's toxins. Others from the push and shove of their work had lost their prayerful spirit and returned with their lives out of balance. So Jesus called these followers to a quiet place to rest awhile.

He calls us today to such places and times where we can regain our balance, refresh our souls, and rid ourselves of junk — necessary times of recreation leisured prayer, reflection and personal renewal. How each of us experiences these much needed times may be quite different. But it is important to realize that uninterrupted busyness does not always build a life. In fact it can be a form of laziness to substitute the work of a job for the work of life. Sometimes it takes as much discipline and diligence to pick up the phone and call a friend as it does to pick up the phone to close a deal. It can take as much courage to deal with your marital and family problems away from the buffer of work as it does to cope with corporate wars. How many times has a man or woman been glad to leave family problems behind and go to one's job?! But busyness is not the same as a well-lived life any more than driven-ness is to be equated with diligence. It can, after all, take enormous discipline and preparation to drive 500 miles in the car with a family of five on vacation — believe me I know. But take it from one who

has heard more than his share of family reminiscences at funerals; such experiences make formative memories and lasting affection.

The rest Jesus invited his disciples to take was, first of all, *a rest that was earned.* (I adapt these following points from a sermon by George Morrison, a Scottish preacher, 1866-1928.) They had been at it for some time without a substantial break. It was not salve for the slothful. It was *a rest with friendship.* We all need refreshing times with others as well as times of solitude and quiet reflection. Recreational times with friends and family — children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews... These are not just the optional things of life; they are the stuff of life. It was *a rest with the beauty and wonder of nature.* There are few things as deeply refreshing to the human spirit as the wonder of God's creation. Whether one's preference is mountains or beach, forest or desert, lake or stream, to walk or sit reflectively — to stop, look, and listen is one of the ways God restores the soul. It was also *a rest with Christ* that the disciples were called to. Notice that when Jesus called them to rest awhile he did not leave them alone nor did they find his presence a hindrance to their joy or camaraderie. A solid Christian classic, along with a Prayerbook and Bible, can be the best things you pack in your vacation luggage. Finally, *it was a rest in preparation for further service or ministry.*

Since such rest is restorative and broadening to mind and heart, placing one's work or ministry in proper perspective, and one's life in larger view, it prepares us for greater service because it so often returns a needed balance to life. I have known priests who never took their vacation days and always found a reason to be around the church on their days off. They often seemed to have one thing in common: the sphere of their ministry and influence seemed to grow smaller with each passing year. I always wondered how they preached on the gospel text when the lectionary brought it before them: *"Come away by yourselves to a lonely place and rest a while."*

Such classics for summer/vacation reading I'd recommend are, of course, different from other times of the year — but here goes:

George MacDonald: *Lilith, Phantastes* (novels)

C. S. Lewis: *The Screwtape Letters, The Space Trilogy — Out of the Silent Planet; Perelandra; That Hideous Strength* (novels); *The Great Divorce*

Charles Williams, any of the novels, but especially *The Greater Trumps, All Hallows' Eve,* and *Descent into Hell*

John Bunyan: *Pilgrim's Progress*

St. Augustine: *The Confessions*

Austin Farrer: *Lord, I Believe*

Michael Ramsey: *Be Still and Know*

Evelyn Underhill: *The Spiritual Life*

O. Hallesby: *Prayer*

George Herbert: *Poems*

R. S. Thomas: *Selected Poems*

T. S. Eliot: *The Four Quartets*

Dante: *The Divine Comedy*

Edwin Muir: *Selected Poems*

I could go on, but this is at least a beginning.

— The Rt. Rev. Mark Lawrence,
Bishop of South Carolina

~ ~ ~ ~

The movie *Green Light*, Spring 2011, TAD, p. 15, is availaable from **Amazon.com, moviesunlimited.com**, among others.

Pentecost

Flames of fire burning,
Vision clear and bright.
Winds of Spirit blowing,
Whirlwind in my sight.
What can be their meaning?
What the reason be?
Comforter descending,
Burn your truth in me.

Now my tongue is telling
God's own works of might.
Spirit take me forward,
Lead me to the Light.
Breath of God receive me;
I retain no sin.
Comforter descending,
Bring your peace within.

Now behold the mystery
That His love would give:
Wind and fire of Spirit,
Make my spirit live.
Now my tongue confesses
You alone as King.
Comforter descending
Gifts to me will bring.

Acts 2: 1-11 and *John 20:19-23*

— Sandra Davis,
Good Shepherd,
Venice, Florida
by permission

Liturgical Language

There is an ongoing debate in the church, particularly the Episcopal Church, about the language we use in our services — our liturgy. The focus of this debate is usually whether to use contemporary English or traditional English (that of earlier Prayer Books dating from the 16th century).

While this discussion is entirely appropriate when it has to do with making what we say in church intelligible and comprehensible to people of the 21st century (and more especially those who use English — a language whose words can acquire different meanings within the space of a few decades), the question has some other aspects that have to do with the purpose of liturgy itself.

Liturgy is the work of the people of God. It is primarily a corporate activity. Liturgical worship is the expression of the church's worship as a whole rather than a collection of individual pieties. When people enter a service of liturgical worship, they are stepping into a spiritual arena that is timeless and catholic (i.e., universal). This kind of worship is also an enactment of God's entry into the human realm in the Person of Jesus Christ which involves us in something that remains essentially unchanged throughout history.

While Liturgy should always be an expression of who we are at any given time and place, as we encounter the timelessness of God, it should also reflect that timelessness as it expresses God's action towards us.

The language we use in Liturgy, therefore, has two purposes. It is clearly about communicating the Divine action in a way that is uncomplicated and lucid. But it is also about reflecting in words and symbols the mystery of the One we worship. To use an analogy from astronomy, it is about simultaneously looking at the details of our creation, as we can perceive and measure them, and peering awestruck through the Hubble telescope at the vastness and immeasurable depth of the universe. Our liturgy is both a photograph of what we understand and a glimpse of the incomprehensible majesty of God.

So how can we put all that into words that are not simplistic or

even crass? How can we reflect both the beauty of the Divine and the "everydayness" and earthiness of our own existence laid before God?

In earlier generations, language that was not understood by most of the people in church was deliberately used to perpetuate ignorance and, thereby, protect the authority of those in charge. Latin and Greek were used in this way long after they had ceased to be the *lingua franca.* Closer to our own time, the archaic language of late Middle English — early prayer books and translations of Scripture — was used to provide scholars with an opportunity to interpret. I remember my first rector saying, "We won't need to preach any more now that the Bible is in modern English." He did, of course, have his tongue in his cheek — I hope!

So what can we conclude from all this?

The use of words and phrases hallowed by ages of liturgical repetition and remaining essentially unchanged is, I believe, one way to express the timelessness and poetry of the Divine. It must never, however, be so archaic that its meaning is completely obscured. That would be irreverent considering its context.

The occasional use of classical languages — those of the original liturgies of the church in the first four centuries of Christian experience — is desirable as an acknowledgment of the continuity of that experience. For example, the Greek "Kyrie eleison Christe eleison" (Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy) is, I believe, a legitimate link with our liturgical history, as long as we know what it means. It does add to the mystery and beauty of what we do.

In the course of every liturgy there is a part called the Liturgy of the Word. This consists of the reading of Scripture from Old and New Testaments, the Proclamation of the Gospel, the Sermon, the Creed, and the Prayers of the People (Intercessions). These should obviously be in clear and immediately understandable language, otherwise their purpose is defeated.

In the Liturgy of the Table, where the focus is on the sacramental nature of worship, there is a place for the poetry of language hallowed by long use. Here is where we join "with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven..."

nd our language acquires a different kind of dignity and nuance often expressed in archaic forms and style. It's not that God only understands Elizabethan English, but that we, as Anglicans, find in this style a beauty and music that takes us out of our immediate mundane existence and into something that has the quality of continuity and permanence — our very limited effort at being in touch with the eternal. I would never rule out the possibility of new poetry and a newly dignified language being able to move us closer to this objective in our liturgy.

The debate goes on. What is important, however, is not that it be merely about translations and traditions but about a serious commitment to making the work of the People of God a truly unique experience of the meeting of time and eternity — the human and the Divine. Beauty in worship is primarily about poetry and music, because these forms of expression transcend the limitations of both dated and merely relevant language.

— The Rev. John Bolton,
Church of Our Saviour,
Atlanta, Georgia

Surprised by Grace

Last week was the first week of Lent. I had one of those experiences when one has to stop and think deeply; when you know you have had a very close encounter with the holiness and grace of God. For two years I looked after a tiny outlying congregation in a coastal village. I went down every Sunday before the morning service in my main parish to preside at the Eucharist. I found it hard going. Most of the congregation of about fifteen persons was over fifty years of age. There were only two young families. I had to do the service in French — including the sermon — and it was quite a journey down to the coast each week. The village was one of those shrinking communities where the young people moved away to the bigger towns to seek employment. I wondered if it was worth keeping the church open.

One Sunday the sacristan came to me and asked if her son could come to see me, as he had begun to show an interest in reading the bible — he was in his 30s and had spent his life far from the things of God. The next week he

came to church. He sat in the back pew and seemed to be absorbing all that was happening in the service. At the end of the service he remained in his pew. I finished greeting each member and noticed the young man was still sitting in his pew as if transfixed. I sat down next to him and asked if he wanted prayer. He looked at me and said no, but began to talk to me as if he were reflecting on a powerful experience. Then he told me that it had been his very first experience of Christian worship. His father, a Tamil, had kept him away from the Christian God and he had always been afraid of Christianity. As he sat in the service, he felt every word penetrating his heart and soul — the scripture readings, the hymns, the sermon. I could see he had been so deeply affected that he was struggling to take it all in. He said, "I could not stop hearing the word of God. I tried to think of things outside, but I could not. I kept seeing my whole life in front of me . . . everything in the service was just speaking to me, it did not stop, the harder I tried to block it out, the stronger it became — I could not resist."

I had an overwhelming sense in that small whitewashed chapel of the presence and the convicting power of the Spirit of God. I have led many to the Lord, and taken part in many evangelistic outreaches, but in all my years of ministry I don't think I have experienced such a powerful and intimate moment when the Lord reached down to a lost sinner, and took hold of him — body and soul.

I began to explain something about God's grace, but somehow my words just seemed feeble. He had already known something so profound and life-changing that my attempt to put it into words seemed inadequate.

Ryan reads his Bible every day now, and is eagerly awaiting his classes that will prepare him for his baptism.

— The Rev. Canon Dave Doveton, Maurititius

Food for Thought

• She was only a whiskey maker, but he loved her still.

• No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

• Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.

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5 Years Ago in TAD

OUCH!

M STARTING to hear the ouches." They mean we're turning an important corner.

The new course that parish aders began to chart two years go is starting to take hold. Our ork of redevelopment has led to owth, new energy and, yes, ange.

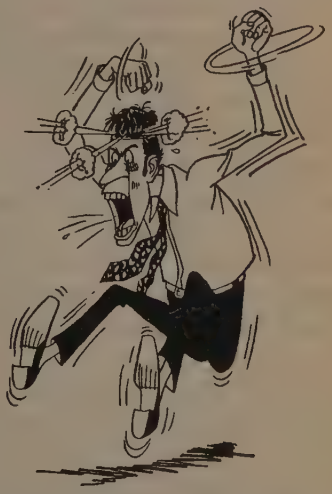
Change hurts. It's also hard ork. It's like marriage counelling, which often begins with a urst of energy and then, as sues come into focus, begin to eem overwhelming and discouging. Many counselors wish for e old equilibrium, just as the ebrews in the wilderness nged for the security of Egypt.

We needn't be apologetic about is new stage in our parish life. e're doing what we said we anted to do. For the most part I ink we're glad for the new life nd new opportunities. But neier should those crying "ouch" el apologetic. Theirs is real ain.

As we continue in this yeasty nd life-enhancing time, I offer ve NO's and five YES's:

1. *NO VILLAINS.* The waters f parish life may no longer be acid, but not because villains throw stones. Reasonable people can disagree.

2. *NO HOLY WARS.* The changing face of parish life reflects new energy, new constituencies and new personalities. Yes, they will come into conflict with those already in place. Conflict is healthy. Holy wars, when disagreement is phrased as right-or-wrong, are destructive.



3. *NO THREATS.* A parish, like a marriage, is a voluntary covenant. It will prosper during conflict and transition. But as in a marriage, a parish cannot survive threats, especially the cancerous threat: do it my way, or I leave.

4. *NO ANONYMOUS BOMBS.* That may be the way terrorists fight. But in a parish the anony-

mous letter and the ominous report of what "they" are saying will only destroy trust.

5. *NO LEADER-BASHING.* Agreeing to serve as Rector or as Vestryman or as a project leader inevitably puts one out front. In warfare, sniping at the point man discourages the troops and thins the ranks of leaders. If we bash our leaders, who will want to serve? The same is true for those who express reservations or disagreement. If we bash them, who will want to debate?

Instead let us say:

1. *YES TO DISCUSSION.* One parish veteran tells me that people are talking more than they have in years. That has to be healthy, even if the exchanges get heated. Silence and lethargy are what destroy.

2. *YES TO HUMOR.* Another parish veteran took me aside in my first week and said, "Don't lose your sense of humor. You'll need it." I think we will all need a capacity to laugh at ourselves and to enjoy this moment.

3. *YES TO REALITY.* If St. Stephen's has been a parish in decline, let's be honest about it. Theologian Kenneth Leech cites the "defeatism of those who refuse to encounter reality." That denial leads to a "culture of Christian pessimism and hopelessness." A "settler-church" that says No to risk ends up "dying by inches," he says.

4. *YES TO LOVE.* Not syrupy emotion or affiliations based on habit, but love as Jesus lived it: self-denying, other-oriented, humble, honest, painful. Communities prosper, Leech says, not when "vanguard leaders tell the stupid people what they need to know," but when the community "wrestles with issues and prays about them."

5. *YES TO PAIN.* At its worst Christianity fulfills Karl Marx's dim view of religion as an opiate. This isn't a time for sedatives or escapes. Jesus had little to offer God's people until he had first struggled in his wilderness. The disciples had to feel the pain of their own doubts and of Jesus' cross. The most effective Christians are men and women who have dared to feel the wounds of their own lives. That makes them open to the wounds of others. Our worshiping community will have little to offer this broken world until we live with God in our wilderness.

— The Rev. Thomas L. Ehrich
St. Stephen's Church, Ferguson, Missouri

0 Years Ago in TAD

WHY NOT

ONCE in a while we listen to omplaints from unknowing indiiduals who seem unable to nderstand why the Church hould rule that this, that, or the ther, cannot be sung or played at wedding or funeral.

The rule is understandable and roper. The Church, as the divine nstitution of our Lord, has a esponsibility to the faith it has eceived, and the teaching of the hurch must be protected. That eaching must be entirely in accord vith our Lord's own teaching, as reserved for us in Holy Scripture. herefore, the Church's hymnody, vhich reflects the Church's sacred eachings, must also be in accord vith the faith of the Church. [One vould not expect a communistic ymn, if there be such a thing, to e sung at, say, the inauguration of president of the USA.] Hymns nd songs have long been known o possess a great teaching power. omebody has said, "Let me write nation's songs, and I care not vho writes its laws."

The burial office or the solemization of a marriage is a public hat is, not private) service of the hurch; and the Church's teachngs on life, either here or hereafter, cannot be adulterated by the personal wishes or ignorance of an individual.

To avoid serious perversion of the Church's teaching, a standard has been adopted: only the "hymns set forth and allowed by the authority of this Church [that is, those in the Hymnal], and Anthems in words of Holy Scripture or of the Book of Common Prayer, may be sung" at services of the Church. (Book of Common Prayer, p viii.)

That choice is wide enough, and no permission beyond that should be sought. The parish priest is allowed no judgment in the matter; his duty is plain: "It shall be [his] duty ... to see that the music ... used in his congregation [is] in accordance with the Book of Common Prayer and as authorized by the Rubric or by the General Convention of this Church .... It shall be his duty to suppress all light and unseemly music and all irreverence in the rendition thereof." (Canon 24)

That does not mean that everything outside the Hymnal, Holy Scripture, and the Book of Common Prayer is false; rather it means that popular sentiment and ignorance ought not to be the guide of the Church's teaching.

— Taddled from *Palm Branches*

Our Readers Write:

My copy of TAD, Spring 2011, is tattered after I tore out paragraphs and whole pages to tuck into my journal. Regarding: "I Can't Sing...." by the Rev. Ted McNabb. Me neither — but I sing anyway. I love the words in our hymnal. The tunes, though familiar enough, are where I run into trouble. I even flunked out of our Praise Choir. After trying out, they kindly suggested I play the tambourine. I didn't have a knack for that either. Still I sing our hymns.

I served as a Worship Leader for some years reading the shortened form of Morning Prayer each month at two nursing and retirement homes in my town. I had a wonderful companion and partner in worship. Bill played piano loudly and sang along to help cover up my not-so-good singing voice. I often told the folks that I have asked God to *please* let me sing nice once before I die. After concluding the worship, I sometimes would add, "Well, I guess I'm not going to die today!"

— Gretchen Olheiser,
Helena, Montana

The Rt. Rev. Geoffrey Rowell is either a young man or in extremely good health. When I kneel, I feel such incredible pain that I cannot focus on anything but the pain. Then, it takes heavy equipment to lift me to my feet. Given that the Episcopal Church is aging, I am sure that many others share this disability. A few years ago I wrote an article on this subject for our diocesan paper. I called it "You Will Never Catch Me on My Knees." I was amazed to see how many persons sought me out to thank me for putting their feelings into words. Bishop Rowell's article was well-written, but he left a lot of us behind in the dust.

— Bonnie Caudell,
Snow Hill, Maryland

A Prayer from Iona

I awake this morning in the presence of the holy angels of God. May heaven open wide before me, above me, and around me that I may see the Christ of my love and his sunlit company in all the things of the earth this day.

— St. Philip,
Marysville, Washington

About the Cover

Olive Wood Crosses

Volunteers on the Evangelism nd Renewal Committee of the piscopal Diocese of Connecticut lo the sorting, packing, and dministrative work required to hip simple olive wood crosses vith a small hole for a neck tring (not included) at ost. As of late 2008, more han 900,000 of the 1 3/4- nch olive wood crosses ave been sold. The rosses are handmade in he Holy Land by alestinian Christian raftsmen.



This is NOT a fund raiser; it is onnecticut's gift to the Church. rosses have been sold in every ne of the fifty states. Many have een bought to take or send over- eas. One church bought crosses o distribute in the Moscow sub- vay; others were given out in the akuma refugee camp in Western enya. It takes four file cabinet rawers to hold all the letters of hanks received from people sing the crosses. The crosses ave unlimited distribution possi- ilities. Over 10,000 have been istributed in prisons all across he USA.

Almost 2,000 Episcopal parishes and individuals have ordered the crosses. Episcopal bishops have purchased thousands of crosses; several buy quantities to give as confirmation gifts. All the American Episcopal parishes across Europe have received a supply. Many servicemen around the world carry one of these crosses as a sign of Christ's love and that of the family or friend who gave it. One retirement community director keeps a small supply in her desk and, when a death occurs, gives the bereaved an olive wood cross. It is to be kept as a sign of comfort as long as needed, and then returned, so others can share in the healing represented by the cross.

The diocesan Evangelism Committee also sells the large cross, approx seven inches long, shown on the cover, also made by Palestinian Christians. Call with questions, 860-408-1549, or contact the Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut Evangelism Committee, E. Laird Mortimer, III, PO Box 571, Tariffville CT 06081-0571.

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HILLSPEAKING

THIS is a highly personal "Hill-speaking." I have cancer.

Cancer is no stranger to the Swindells family. My paternal grandfather and grandmother, my mother, my sister, Patient Wife, and our middle son all died of cancer.

My younger daughter is a two-time survivor. My oldest granddaughter has successfully undergone surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation, and a son-in-law has had his cancer in remission.

So why not me?

When Grandmother Swindells died of cancer in the early 1930s it was spoken of in hushed tones, as having cancer was the victim's fault. Much has changed in the past eighty years and cancer is openly confronted today. Much material is readily available that runs from measures on how to prevent as well as how to survive cancer. Several non-profit organizations have been formed to further research on prevention and cure.

So what can you and I do? Pray. Pray for those who have cancer and for their loved ones and caregivers. Pray that a cure will be found.

Support financially one or more of the organizations that are in the fore in researching prevention and cure, such as the American Cancer Society and the National Foundation for Cancer Research.

Read and heed the material that is available. I have cancer. Why me?

Why not me?

— The Trustees' Warden

O Father of mercies and God of all comfort, our only help in time of need: We humbly beseech thee to behold, visit and relieve thy sick servant *N.* for whom our prayers are desired. Look upon *him* with the eyes of thy mercy; comfort *him* with a sense of thy goodness; preserve *him* from the temptations of the enemy; and give *him* patience under his affliction. In thy good time, restore *him* to health, and enable *him* to lead the residue of *his* life in thy fear, and to thy glory; and grant that finally *he* may dwell with thee in life everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. — BCP

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11-2

✠ DEATHS ✠

The Rev. William Parker Baxter, Jr., 68, in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. A graduate of Berkeley Divinity School at Yale University, Fr. Baxter was ordained in 1968 and served parishes in Washington and Georgia. He was a member of the staff of the Diocese of South Carolina. He became rector of St. Thomas', Owings Mills, Maryland in 1979 where he served until retiring in 2007.

The Rev. Eric Blackstock, 9, in Courtenay, British Columbia. A veteran of World War II, Fr. Blackstock was ordained in 1956 and served as priest in the Dioceses of Athabasca, Edmonton, British Columbia, the Yukon, and Caledonia before retiring in 1992.

The Very Rev. Lloyd Gage Chattin, 85, in Trenton, New Jersey. A graduate of Philadelphia Divinity School, he was ordained a deacon and priest in 1953. Elected a canon of Trinity Cathedral in 1959, he was made Dean of the cathedral in 1960, serving there until retiring in 1993. He was also president of the Anglican Society and honorary vice president of the Seamen's Church Institute in Philadelphia.

✠ **The Rev. Robert Clark, 80**, in Glen Lake, New York. A graduate of Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, Bexley Hall, and Philadelphia Divinity School, he was ordained in 1961. He served parishes in New Jersey and New York, including Church of the Messiah, Glen Falls, where he was rector from 1969 to 1993. He was a Navy chaplain in the U. S. Navy Reserve for 25 years.

✠ **The Rev. Kenneth Robb Coleman**, 84, in Wallingford, Connecticut. Ordained in 1952, he served at St. Margaret's, Washington, D.C. In 1955, he became Episcopal chaplain at Yale University, a position he held until 1967. He and his wife spent three years in missionary and outreach work in Cali, Columbia, and then Oil City, Pennsylvania, and Cheshire, Connecticut, before retiring in 1989.

✠ **The Rev. Dr. Robert Crouse**, 80, in Crousetown, Nova Scotia.

A graduate of Harvard Divinity School, he was ordained in 1953 in Nova Scotia. He joined the faculty of the University of King's College in 1979. Fr. Crouse was a voice of wisdom, knowledge, and inspiration. His reputation as a respected scholar spread across North America and Europe through his participation in international conferences, his visiting lectures, and publication of more than seventy articles, reviews, and translations. He served as a delegate to General Synod, as an Examining Chaplain for the Diocese of Nova Scotia, and was a member of the Primate's Theological Commission. He also served as the Bishop Short Canon Theologian for the Diocese of Saskatchewan. He was awarded a Doctor of Divinity from King's in 2007. Fr. Crouse was also a talented musician; he played the organ for the Liturgy at St. Mary the Virgin, Crousetown, the Sunday before his death.

✠ **The Most Rev. Walter A. Gerth, D.D.**, 86, in Fort Worth, Texas. A graduate of Episcopal Theological Seminary of Kentucky, he served as an Episcopal priest for forty years in the Dioceses of Kentucky, Michigan, and Texas, before retiring in 1992. He was elected to serve as a bishop in the Southern Episcopal Church and became the first Bishop Ordinary of The Anglican Diocese of Texas in 1995, where he served until his death.

✠ **The Rev. Canon Carl Bartlett Gracely**, 101, in Walnut Creek, California. In 1971, at age 62, he was ordained an Episcopal priest. In 1974, he retired from private industry and moved to California where he created programs for hospice and pastoral care at John Muir and Mount Diablo Medical Centers in Walnut Creek. In 2005 he received the John Muir Foundation award, an annual recognition award previously reserved for the physician staff only at John Muir Medical Center. He worked as chaplain at John Muir until his 100th birthday. He also served as associate at St. Timothy's, Walnut Creek.

✠ **Alexander P. Grice III**, 85, in Norfolk, Virginia. Active in the affairs of Christ and St. Luke's Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Southern Virginia, he was instrumental in the acquisition of the Camp Chanco in Surry. A master woodworker,

e built the altars for the Chapel t Talbot Hall, the Can-terbury enter at Old Dominion niversity, and the conference nter at Camp Chanco, though is crowning achievement was he altar in his home parish hurch, which replicates the orig-hal stone. Retiring as master of he acolyte guild after forty years, e was appointed Verger for the arish and served in this regard ntil 2009.

The Rev. Boyd Latimer, 81, in klahoma City, Oklahoma. rdained in 1953, Fr. Latimer rved missions and parishes in ansas, Colorado, and Okla-oma over a 55-year span. He lso served as associate at MORE hurch, Eureka Springs, Arkan-as. He and his wife established he Shepherd's Nook, a Christ-an bookstore there. He last rved as assistant at All Souls', klahoma City from 1995 to 007.

The Rev. Paul E. Neuer, 71, Littleton, North Carolina. A raduate of Nashotah House, he as ordained in 1977 and served everal parishes in New Jersey. r. Neuer was a leader there in ursillo and Kairos. He served s priest-in-charge at St. Alban's, Littleton, North Carolina, since 2003.

✠ **The Rt. Rev. Richard L. Shimpfky**, 70, in Ridgewood, New Jersey. A graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary, he was assistant rector, St. Peter's, Arlington, Virginia, 1970-72; adjunct faculty member at VTS from 1972 to 1977; a trustee of VTS from 1981 to 1985; rector, All Saints, Alexandria, 1972 to 1977; and rector at Christ Church, Ridgewood, from 1977 to 1990. He was elected second Bishop of El Camino Real in 1990 and served in that role until 2004. Bishop Shimpfky was president of Province VIII, 1994 to 2004, and a member of the board of trustees, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, 1995 to 2005. He served as bishop-in-residence at St. George's, Flushing, New York, beginning in 2005.



Rest eternal, grant unto them
O Lord,
and let light-perpetual
shine upon them.



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Revelation

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.".

It's always hard to expand on evelation. What more is there to ay about God's only Son and ne truth that is the very essence f Creation? All that is came into eing through him. Literally, very act of worship, every nought of Jesus, is formed in the nowledge that, in him, we see ne perfect image of God and nat God's truth is the founda- on of all that is. St. John's reve- ation of the nature of Christ eads all others.

What can be said about the man o whom this revelation was iven? St. John perceived with an nderstanding that surpasses nat of most people, even today, ith all the theology accumulat- d over two thousand years. In ct, we might say that theology s only a help — and sometimes a indrance— to us as we search or God. How does one come to is depth of understanding?

We have so few stories about ne lives and studies and teach- gs of the early theologians. We nd to look for methods and practices, for paths that will guarantee that we'll end up at the right place, increased rightly in our knowledge of God and of God's Son, Jesus Christ. Those women and men of ancient times who gave their lives to prayer and searching for God's truth were human in the same ways we are human, knowing the same temptations and the same failings, and risking the same misinterpretations along the way in their search as we meet in ours. How did St. John receive the revelation?

The story goes that John lived to a very old age in Ephesus, surrounded by a community of believers, teaching and praying. He lived, tradition tells us, to be so old he was not able to get around on his own. He fulfilled Jesus' prediction that "the day would come when he would be carried from place to place by someone else who will determine where he will go and when." John continued to teach and toward the end, became so feeble that he could not deliver lectures or lead prayers. Lying on a stretcher, all he could say, over and over, was, "Little children, love one another. That is enough."

A sweet story of a weak, emaciated old man, drawn and wrinkled, his thin skin sagging over his bones. Are his eyes turned up, searching the heavens, or are they closed, content and resigned? Do they hold still a gleam of the divine, or are they clouded with the years? There's more than a sweet story; even though we have no knowledge of his daily life, we can draw our conclusions: If it is enough to love one another, then that is because the very essence of God is love. It is the first and the last revelation of God. And isn't that the earliest teaching given to children, even today: "God is Love"?

John must have received his revelations through a lifetime of prayer and opening himself to God. The practices and methods are not set in stone; they will vary from person to person. What is essential is dedication, desire, devotion, persistence, even through the times when God seems not to be present. True revelation is not when or how the world was created or at what time and through what action it will end. True revelation is finding the essence, arriving at the essential, determining what finally, will become our life.

Word. Light. Beginning. Life. The world did not know Jesus, but we can know him, and through him we can know God. *Believe. Power. Glory. Grace* and *Truth*. These are not things we achieve through process but treasures we find have been given to us, gifts we stumble on as we search, like the treasure found by the man in his own backyard. "The Word became flesh and lived among us." I have an idea that St. John didn't arrive at his revelation by working probability tables or studying theology books. He may not have known even what he was looking for, but found one day, perhaps by surprise, that in the faithfulness that was his life, God had given him the gift of truth.

— The Rev. Mary B. Richard,
Church of the Holy Cross,
Shreveport, Louisiana

The mission of the Church is, in its deepest sense, God's — not ours.

— *Pan-Anglican Review*

A Litany of the Holy Ghost

Holy Ghost, come and renew the face of the earth.
Holy Ghost, shed Thy light in our souls.
Holy Ghost, engrave Thy law in our hearts.
Holy Ghost, inflame us with the flame of Thy love.
Holy Ghost, teach us to pray well.
Holy Ghost, enlighten us with Thy heavenly inspirations.
Holy Ghost, lead us in the way of salvation.
Holy Ghost, inspire in us the practice of good.
Holy Ghost, grant us the merits of all virtues.
Holy Ghost, make us persevere in justice.
Holy Ghost, be Thou our everlasting reward.

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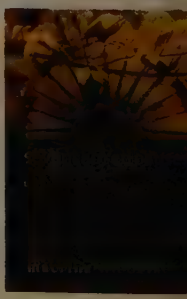
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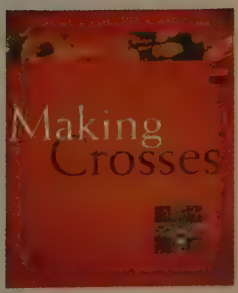
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TAD11-

he Religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

Most people generally assume t Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob re the founders of a new notheistic religion that would ntually develop into Judaism, d from which Christianity uld ultimately arise. While t concept is basically true, it is entirely accurate.

No one knows for sure when raham lived, but it was cer-nly no later than the early sec-d millennium BCE. At that time the known religions of the rld were polytheistic (wor-ping many gods) and for the st part idolatrous (attributing ine powers to physical ages of those gods). Rabbinic dition says that Abraham's[2] her, Terah, was by profession idol maker in the city of Ur of Chaldeans in southern sopotamia. God revealed nself to the young Abraham, o went into his father's shop d saw dozens of idols of kinds, including one very ge one. He took an axe and ashed all the idols except the large one, then put the axe into its hands. When Terah returned and saw the destruction, Abraham told him that the large idol had smashed all the other ones. His furious father said, "That is impossible. It is only stone and clay." Abraham replied, "Then why do you worship it?" It would seem that Terah was converted, because he and his family left Ur and headed into the wilderness. The Bible gives no indication that God actually spoke to any of them until much later, but it is reasonable that they made this journey either at God's command or in search of God. The latter is most reasonable, because it was a strong belief in those days that each major god had his own territory, and had power and authority only over that territory. Some gods were stronger than others, but one did not worship the strongest god, he worshiped the one that ruled over where the worshiper lived. If a man moved to a different country, he would be expected to start worshiping the gods of that country. When Elimelech and Naomi moved to Moab, they showed the strength of their faith by continuing to worship God. This was an act of courage, because they undoubtedly

name was Abram, not Abraham. He was called Abraham until Isaac was born. For sake of simplicity, however, we will refer m as Abraham throughout the article.

believed that the Moabite god Chemosh might get angry and punish them. When their Moabite daughter-in-law decided to move back to Israel with Naomi, she said, "Your people shall be my people, and your God my God" (she would become King David's great-grandmother).

When people traveled, they would often carry a container of the soil of their homeland with them. This enabled their god to travel with them and protect them.[3] Often the gods would have battles over territory, and these would be manifested to humans in such things as great storms, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc. It is evident that through much of Israelite history their neighboring nations either feared God or had reverence for him, yet continued to worship their local gods as well. In most of the ancient religions (except that of the Israelites), it was acceptable to worship foreign gods, as long as you also worshiped the local ones and considered them primary. This is why Rome had little religious prc lem with their conquests, wi the exception of the Jews. A they asked was that they add a Roman god to their panthec and in exchange the Roma would add a god of their co quest's choice to the Roman pa theon. The Jews, of cours would have none of this. By t time they had fallen und Roman rule they were strict monotheistic, and they refus to acknowledge any Roma gods, and did not want t pagan Romans to place God the midst of their false idols.[4]

Another important aspect of a world religions in those days that the gods were not friendly mankind. In most Middle Eas ern mythology the ruling g won a great battle with the oth gods, and created the earth as token of his victory, rather like medal. He then created man tend to the earth — to keep t medal "polished." If man fail to do the job well, the god wou punish him or destroy him an create another caretaker. Th ancient mythology is reflected the biblical creation sto where man was given "domi

[3] It is a custom among many Jews even today to be buried with a little soil from Israel in their graves. While this is a vestige of the ancient superstition, it has no superstitious meaning today. It is simply a token of the feeling that many Jews have of their unity with *Haretz Yisrael*, "the Land of Israel."

[4] Rome finally recognized that the Jew would behave if it made an exception f them, and that they could be very troubl some if not.

" over the world and all its atures. In Greek mythology, Titans, who were the ancestors of the gods, were formed out chaos (no specific creator is ntified). There was a bit of a otic mess left over after their mation, and mankind ared out of that. The gods ked on mankind as someng of a cosmic afterthought, d a nuisance.

The ancient gods were cruel d capricious, using men as ects of entertainment, for perhal advantage, or for physical easure when they bothered th them at all. There were virlly no moral or ethical standrds for the gods other than t of obedience to the gods that re stronger than they. They eated, lied and murdered at ll; they killed their parents, mmitted incest, ate their chilen, and indulged in just about ery crime or sin that we can nceive of. Because they were ine, however, there was nothwrong with whatever they l. When God revealed himself Abraham, he revealed himself a God that was totally differ- from any other god that the ople understood. He was a ral God who expected his ople to be moral, and he cared for his people and expected them to serve him in a caring way. It does not seem that Abraham understood him to be a loving God, but such a concept was so far from any understanding of divinity at the time that this is not surprising. He certainly did understand God as being good, however, rather like a strict monarch who sincerely sought the welfare of his subjects, and who could be trusted.

At this point it is necessary to introduce a theological term that applies to most of the Hebrews and Jews up to the time of the Babylonian Exile in the sixth century BCE. That term is *henotheism*. It was created by the German philosopher Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854). Schelling argued (and most modern scholars agree) that Abraham was not a monotheist (believing that there is only one God), but that he was a henotheist. A henotheist believes that there is a multitude of gods, but only one who is above all the others, and he alone is to be worshiped and served. As late as the time of the Exodus this was clearly a common belief — the First Commandment says, "You shall have no other gods *before me*" (Ex. 20:3). A common name

for God was Elohim, which is a singular or plural word in Hebrew, although the form is plural. When used as a singular it means God, and as a plural (usually as *elohim acheirim*) it means "the other [foreign] gods."

Another aspect of the God of Abraham is that he was considered reasonable. When God proposed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abraham reasoned with him to try to reduce the number of righteous people needed to spare the cities. This was a unique concept — to question or challenge a god was to court violent destruction or long and painful punishment. It took not only great courage, but also a profound understanding of the nature of God for Abraham to dare to try to change his mind.

God was also a strict and demanding God, who would put Abraham through intense mental and spiritual agony when he ordered him to take his son Isaac to the mountain and offer him as a human sacrifice.[5] Even though we know from the story that he had no intention of letting Abraham go through with it, Abraham did not know that. God was not trying to find out whether Abraham had sufficie faith to obey the order — already knew the answer to th — but Abraham had to find o if he had sufficient faith. TH was also a test of Isaac's fait Isaac was a young teenager ar Abraham was over one-hundr years old. There is no questi that if Isaac were not also willi to obey God's order, he cou have overcome his father ar refused to be placed on the alt of sacrifice. This must, howev have left a strong emotion mark on Isaac. It is evident fro the later stories that Isaac did n take his father's God nearly seriously as did Abraham. fact, he was probably mo afraid of him than dedicated him. Isaac's son Jacob twi referred to his father's God "the Fear" (Gen. 31 :42, 53), ind cating that this was probab what Isaac had called him.

The stories of Isaac indica that he was a rather dull chara ter, falling far short of being th dynamic powerhouse of fai that is seen in both his father an his son. He apparently taug Jacob little about God.

Jacob either was a pagan hi self or at least allowed paganis in his household until after H had left his father-in-law's ser

[5] Islam teaches that it was Ishmael, not Isaac, whom God ordered Abraham to sacrifice.

and returned to the land of naan. Jacob did not become a stion of faith until after he estled with God (his con- ence?) just before confronting brother Esau, whom he had eated many years before. ereafter he was unquestion- ly loyal to God, although also questionably henotheistic.

When Jacob and his tribe oved to Egypt, where his ven sons were reunited with eir brother Joseph, there is little ubt that they recognized the ds of Egypt, even though their imary religious service was to od. In the course of the cen- ries that they were in slavery, wever, they were seriously fected with Egypt's polythe- n. Among many other events, is is evidenced by the fact that ter the Exodus they called on Aaron to build them a lden calf in the desert. This ould have been the Egyptian ll-god Apis, who would also op up a number of times in er Jewish history.

The first truly monotheistic igion in history arose not out the religion of the Israelites, angely enough, but in Egypt the fourteenth century BCE. e Pharaoh Amenhotep IV ected the polytheistic religion of Egypt, and taught that there is only one God, whom he identified as Aton, the god of the Sun. He averred that no other gods even exist, and that Aton was pure spirit, who manifested himself to man as the Aten, the sun-disk. He also taught that God is loving, merciful and moral, and expects his worshipers to be the same. He changed his name to Akhen-aten, "The Effective Spirit of the Aten," and changed his nine-year-old son-in-law's name to Tutankh-aten, "Worshiper of the Aten." He forbade all pagan religions, and disbanded the guilds of priests throughout Egypt. The pantheon of gods that they worshiped was known as the Amun. The priests of the Amun were powerful, however, and upon Akhenaten's untimely death (probably by assassination), they took power again, and banned the worship of the Aten under penalty of death. The boy Tutankh-aten was made Pharaoh, and they changed his name to Tutankh-amun, "Worshiper of the Amun." He was, of course, the famous "King Tut." They then took extraordinary efforts to wipe the memory of Akhenaten from history. Fortunately, they did not succeed, and enough of him is known that we

can reconstruct a great deal about his life and beliefs.[6]

Although Atonism, as the monotheistic religion was known, was proscribed, it remained popular among the aristocracy, and was secretly practiced by them. A century later the Hebrew baby Moses would be raised in the palace of Seti I (the father of Rameses II), and was almost certainly exposed to Atonism even more than he was exposed to the religion of his ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When he was forced to flee into the desert, he met his future father-in-law Jethro, who was a priest of the God of Abraham. Jethro instructed Moses in his religion, and when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, everything fell into place. The God of Abraham, a loving, just and moral God, had already revealed himself to Moses in the faith of Aton as well as through the heritage of Abraham.

The consensus of scholars is that Moses was also a henotheist. It would be surprising if he were not, when we consider that despite his Atonist exposure h was raised officially in the pol theistic Amunist religion whi he was in Egypt, and his fathe in-law and mentor Jethro wa undoubtedly a henotheist. Th First Commandment is an ind cation of Moses' henotheism "Thou shalt have no other goc *before me.*" The history of Isra and Judah was one of the co stant incursion of paganism int the worship of the Jews, and the constant struggle of th prophets to drive it out. It wa the henotheism of the people an most of their leaders that mad this incursion so easy. False goc are attractive, because oftentime it seems easier to serve ther than to serve God.

If we read the Old Testamen carefully it becomes evident tha the Jews in general, including th great prophets, were henotheisti until the time of the Babylonia Exile. In the story of Elijah's con test with the priests of Baal, it i clear that Elijah was not trying t prove that Baal didn't exist, bu that God (Yahweh) was so vastl more powerful than Baal tha Baal was of no importance an therefore worship of him wa destructive.

By the time of the return from the Exile at the end of the sixth

[6] The Egyptians believed that if they could wipe a person from history, that person would not be able to enter heaven, and would cease to exist altogether. They also tried that with the first female Pharaoh, Hatshepsut.

ntury BCE, the Jews had atured spiritually and theologlly to the point that they realid that there is only one God. om that time on they can be nsidered completely monotheic, and all conflicts with other ds were in the realization that ese gods did not even exist. It is not a matter that of all the ds only Yahweh should be orshiped, but rather that hweh is the only God, and to rn to any others is to turn to sehood and foolishness, and is insult to Yahweh.

Although the Jews were fiercemonotheistic by that time, the st of the world definitely was t (monotheistic Atonism had sappeared altogether from gypt centuries before). Saint ul had a problem with that th the early Gentile Christians, no had converted from Roman and Greek polytheism and often did not completely understand monotheism. In the Roman world, for example, all meat that was sold by the butchers had originally been sacrificed in the temple of some god. The Christians, realizing that these gods did not exist, ate it with no qualms. Paul pointed out, however, that many still did not fully understand that these gods did not exist, and might find a stumbling block in the eating of meat that had been sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8:4ff).

Even today we are lured by false gods — material wealth, power, and superstitions. As always, we must place God above everything else.

— The Rev. Richard R. Losch,
St. James,
Livingston, Alabama

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One-Liners That Really Matter

me phrases just seem to cause to think "say what?" nsider the following Laurence er "Yogi" Berra one-liners. . . .

• Half the lies they tell about aren't true.

• I never said most of the ngs I said.

• I wish I had an answer to t because I'm tired of answer- that question.

• If you ask me anything I n't know, I'm not going to swer.

y own contribution would be nething like: Did you ever tice how some one liners are rth pondering and others just ke you stop and think?

me one-liners are whimsical, ne are profound, and still oth- are life changing.

Yogi fashion, I think I would that "my number one all- ne most important one-liner n be summed up in two one- ers." The first, which you have perhaps heard many times, is from the gospel of John . . . "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that all that believe in him might have everlasting life." God's most precious gift to the world was the life of his son for my/our redemption. Jesus died so that we might live forever in God's presence. That's my bedrock, my starting point as a child of God. God loved me so much that he sent his son to die so that I might live. Wow. . . . that is a one-liner that has forever changed my life.

The other most important one-liner that I know has to do with a topic near and dear to the majority of folks in a consumer-oriented society such as ours. It has to do with our possessions, our stuff. Recently I attended the Bishop's Conference on Stewardship at Camp Allen and I once again crossed paths with Carol Anderson, the former National Stewardship Chair for the Episcopal Church. I heard Carol offer a one liner that I first heard from her many, many years ago. Carol said, "Stewardship is all I do with all I have after I say yes to God." That phrase has stuck with me since way back then

because it resonates with my sense of what it means to say yes to the one who loves me so much that he gave his son up for me and, further, that he trusts me, and allows me to be a steward of his stuff in his kingdom.

As I have shared in the past, I learned a long time ago that nothing "really" belongs to me. . . . . everything I have . . . . my family, my home, my investments . . . . all my stuff really belongs to God and I am the caretaker, read that. . . . His steward for a time and a season. The concept that "it all belongs to God" has been with me for over thirty years now and it puts all of the rest of my life in perspective. It shapes my view of how I spend the three "Ts" we each are given by our Creator — time, talent, and treasure. It shapes the kinds of cars we drive and the vacations we take in the Wareing household; it shapes our giving and our serving. I have a different view of all of the things I oversee and care for when I acknowledge that it all belongs to the Lord of the universe.

— The Rev. Robert Wareing,
Church of the Ascension,
Houston, Texas

Life of Faith

It has always puzzled me wh faith is often and almost spok about solely as a personal act don't know about you but would find it impossible to pu sue the life of faith all by myse I need the witness of others an their prayerful presence in ord to respond to the summons faith, much less the challenges living life from the perspective faith.

It is in the Body of Christ stri ing to live into the vision of li that our Lord, Christ Jesus, ha given the pattern for us to follo and to which Holy Scriptu points, where I truly encount living and lively faith. Becaus Christianity is primarily a way living, the most important gif our Lord has given us to pursu that life are the awareness, ene gy, and faith that the Body Christ manifest in a particula place at a particular time. Just a our Lord chose to enter huma history at a particular time an through a particular people, w are called to live our life of fait with everyday events and pe ple.

Worship, particularly our cele bration and active participatio

the holy mysteries of the ine liturgy of the Mass is both gateway and a crucible for ming and shaping our life in church and the world. Mass a faith event. It is where we rn the language and patterns God's desire for and love of people made in God's image, well as the world, which was ated as an expression of God's

very Mass is an opportunity a love encounter with Jesus, pioneer and perfector of our th. With study, prayer, and entiveness, it is possible to n understanding that not only n perfection only be found in d, but God uses our imperfec- ns in the context of the com- unity of faith to make crooked es straight. In the community faith we can admit our sinful man nature and our inability be the persons we would like be. Others in the community, th the aid of Scripture, can p each of us to discern and ng a word of truth to the structive power of sin. The at story of redemption is con- ntly being written anew in the es of those God loves, and the nderful reality is that the text as variable as our lives.

In Jesus the eternal has entered time. Each time we engage in Eucharistic worship, the very power of our Lord's sacrifice and the effects of his life, death, and resurrection touch us with salvific power. We may not value the power of the sacred encounter or the community that is built around it and formed by it every time, but the joy of our redemption is always within reach. It is always my hope that every time we gather to enter the sacred and timeless space of the Eucharist, our faith will be strengthened and we will grow in the knowledge of God's purpose — thereby, making us more effective ambassadors for the Gospel and the communal life which is ours in the Body of Christ.

— The Very Rev. William Willoughby, III,
St. Paul's, Savannah, Georgia



Loving Life; Loving Others

He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. – John 12:25

I confess to being puzzled by this pronouncement. What is the Savior saying to Andrew and Philip? What is he saying to us? I confess that I love my life. I love my wife and our daughters. I love my job. I love my work with the Diocese. I love my car, my boat, my house, and even our cats. I am happy and comfortable. I am not unique in this. I suspect that many of us, most of us, when we scrape back the petty distractions, love our lives.

Are we, who love our lives, to lose our lives for eternity? Perhaps not. Perhaps the above passage is a sort of rationalization. Jesus is about to conclude his public ministry. The handwriting is now on the wall and Jesus understands that the time is at hand – the time he has been telling his disciples about, the time that Peter, in a few Gospel lessons back, rebuked Jesus for foretelling, the time when Jesus will be delivered up to the authorities, suffer mar things, and be killed.

Perhaps it's to be expecte when handwriting of that type on the wall, to think and say th if you love your life you will lo it, but if you hate your life in th world then you will have etern life. This sort of rationalizing this verse is not satisfying, how ever.

I believe Christ is saying som thing greater. I don't believe or don't want to believe – th Jesus is saying that we canno love our families, our jobs, th world around us, our friend our pets. Isn't one of the com mandments to honor our father and mothers so that our life ma be long in the land? Didn't Jesu say that God loves the flowers o the field and the birds of the air Isn't the world God's creatio and aren't we called on to b stewards of our world and it resources? And, perhaps mos poignant in this respect, isn't th second great commandment t love our neighbors as ourselves

All this seems to add up to lov ing our lives in this world, no hating our lives. What then i the message in this verse fron John's Gospel? I think we ar given several keys if we loo back at Jesus' ministry.

One key is found in the temp-
ion story. The devil took Jesus
a very high mountain and
ered him all the kingdoms of
world and their glory. Jesus
ected the temptation, replying,
ou shall worship the Lord
ur God and him only shall you
ve" (Matthew 4: 8-10).

second key is found in the
taposition of the Fifth
mmandment and Jesus'
ponse when his mother and
thers were calling for him
ile he was teaching. On one
nd, there is the commandment
to honor our father and moth-
On the other, we have Jesus
ching the crowd flocked
ound him when someone says
t his mother and brothers are
iting on him. His answer is
t "Coming, mother." Rather,
response was, "Here are my
ther and my brothers!
noever does the will of God is
brother, and sister, and moth-
(Mark 3:34-35).
A third key is found in the
ry of the Rich Young Ruler.
e ruler asked Jesus what he
st do to inherit eternal life.
us initially said to follow the
mmandments of Moses, and
ruler said he had done those
ngs from his youth. Jesus then
said he must do the one thing he still lacked — sell all he has, give the proceeds to the poor, and come follow him. Upon hearing this, the ruler went away sad, "for he was very rich" (Luke 18: 18-23).

I believe these stories reveal much about the meaning of this Gospel passage and the tension inherent in the pronouncement that he who loves his life will lose it and he who hates his life will keep it for eternal life. Allegory or reality, the story of temptation is a metaphor for dealing with the temptation of making life in this world our god, of placing our love of life before love of God and our neighbor.

So, too, the story of Jesus and his mother and brothers shows that, in being about his ministry, Jesus had lost himself in his mission. In doing the will of his Father, he denied himself the comforts of hearth and home.

The example of the Rich Young Ruler is that he could not or would not deny himself. His love of his life prevented him from selling what he had and giving to the poor. His love of his life perhaps prevented him from seeing and responding to

the will of God. I do not believe the Rich Young Ruler erred in loving his life; I believe that he erred in loving his life so much that he could not or would not sacrifice it to inherit eternal life. In loving his life, he risked losing it.

While all three of these stories can help us understand what Jesus was saying in this passage from John's Gospel, it is the story of the Rich Young Ruler that provides the background music most familiar to us. When heard with this story, Jesus' pronouncement that he who loves his life will lose it is neither a contradiction of the commandment to love our neighbor as our self, nor rationalization of what was about to befall. Rather, he placed before the Rich Young Ruler – and before us – the end result of loving our life in this world more than loving God and our neighbor.

By succumbing to this temptation, we, like the Rich Young Ruler, risk losing our life. From this temptation, Good Lord, deliver us. Amen.

– Doug Overbey, St. Michael's and All Angels, Knoxville, Tennessee

We are Called to Learn to Trust God

There are few people wh seek to deny the reality of Go who are atheists in the liter meaning of the word. The ev dence of our own eyes is that th world is the creation of a divi Being who has richly endowe it with signs of his great beau and glory. Our very existence itself a living witness to th one in whose image we a made. His provision for ou needs attests to his desire that w should prosper and grow as human race. Unfortunately w take for granted these man blessings and become accus tomed to expect our dail bread, without giving it muc thought, until we find ou selves hungry or thirsty. At tha point, like the Israelites in th wilderness, we are more likely t complain about our situatio than to thank God for the man days we have hitherto enjoyed Or worse, we begin fighting ove the resources available to us What does it take for us to lear to trust in God who created us who certainly did not brin Israel out of Egypt to die in th desert?

Generous though God is in hi gift of so many material thing

h in God is of infinitely ater significance than our pendence upon his providence our existence in this world. would be very poor creatures eed if our relationship with d extended no further than daily bread. The nature with ich God has endowed us is, wever, one in which we bear a eness to him whose desire is t our fallen humanity may be onciled at last to himself. This eness is no mere resemblance appearance, but a spiritual stence whose eternal outcome pends upon the greatest of all d's gifts, his Son Jesus Christ, d his redeeming death on the ss for sinners. This astonish- gift of grace is sufficient not y to reconcile us to God, but hope that we might share in life of Christ, for the love of d, which has been revealed by cross and resurrection, out- ighs the wrath of God and the t punishment that our sinful rds and deeds deserve. The ly Spirit at work in us is God's assurance that we are not y redeemed, but so filled with that we may boast about the ce of God who is bringing us share in his glory.

The raw truth is that we have righteousness of our own, however hard we may try to close our minds to the hopelessness of our human condition, instead occupying our thoughts with the business of daily living in a world which is drifting away. What we have hidden from ourselves is not hidden from God, however, and the Samaritan woman at the well at Sychar marvels that Jesus knows everything about her, as she boldly engages him in debate, having received his encouragement to speak by being asked to draw water for him, against all the conventions of the day. She is truthful, as she reflects that she has no real husband, and that her life has fallen far short of the faithfulness which Scripture enjoins upon us all. Her encounter and conversation with Jesus bring her to that living water which no well can provide. It does not matter that she is a Samaritan woman: faith is God's gift to those whom he chooses and calls, a gift that overflows and brings many from the Samaritan city to salvation, confounding the disciples and opening their eyes to see the harvest, which is waiting all around them to be gathered in to God.

— The Rev. Stephen Trott,
www.churchnewspaper.com

Contents

Before and After 3
Power of Pentecost 5
Failures 8
Pentecost as Festival of Conviction 9
The Great Thanksgiving 11
Share the Good News 14
The Feast of Pentecost 15
The Importance of Leisure 17
Liturgical Language 21
Surprised by Grace 23
25 Years Ago in TAD 27
50 Years Ago in TAD 29
Hillspeaking 33
Deaths 35
Revelation 39
Religion of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob 49
One-Liners That Really Matter 57
Life of Faith 58
Loving Life, Loving Others 60
Called to Trust God 62